

INTERAGENCY ADVISORY GROUP

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20415

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SUMMARY OF 313th MEETING

July 15, 1976

I. Legislative Report

Mr. Jacobson introduced Frederick A. Kistler, new Director of the Bureau of Policies and Standards, who discussed current legislative activities.

CSC Annual Legislative Program

We are now in the time of year when we are compiling ideas and suggestions for review and recommendation to the Commission for the annual legislative program for 1977. We value the ideas and views of the members of the IAG. Besides surveying CSC bureaus, offices and regions, we have discussed possible program contents with the Legislative Advisory Committee of the IAG. We will keep the Legislative Advisory Committee as well as the full IAG informed about final proposals listed in the program submitted to the Office of Management and Budget.

The major topics discussed by the Legislative Advisory Committee were:

- the need for amendment of the Veterans Preference Act to be more compatible with merit principles,
- continued problems resulting from executive pay compression,
- the need for grade or salary retention in the event of downgradings.

Hatch Act

The Democratic Nominating Convention accepted a minority report changing the draft party platform which calls for revision of the Hatch Act. The new plank states:

"We support the revision of the Hatch Act so as to extend to Federal workers the same political rights enjoyed by other Americans as a birthright, while still protecting the civil service from political abuse."

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While news reports have pointed out that Governor Carter has not personally taken a position on the issue, his staff did not oppose adoption of the stronger language of the minority report.

II. Federal Personnel Administration Career Program

Mr. Jacobson introduced Raymond Sumser, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel and Training, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, one of six personnel director members of the Federal Personnel Administration Career Board and Merle Junker, who heads the Career Board's small program staff.

Mr. Sumser described the Board's role as representatives of the IAG, and his appearance as a report to the IAG on the Board's stewardship. He discussed their participation in the 1976 Personnel Directors Conference in Charlottesville, where each Board member met with a small group of personnel directors to gain feedback on the Board's activities and suggestions for future Board consideration. Among the more significant topics reported, which the Board feels it should speak to in the next year, are those concerning:

- o Classifier training and enrichment of classification jobs.
- o Approaches for small agencies.
- o Better communication media for the Board.
- o Career interns--quality of training and quantity of intake.
- o Proposals for credentialing of journeymen.
- o Stimulating agencies without career programs to participate.
- o Availability and quality of training.
- o Whether this should remain the personnel directors' program, or is greater CSC involvement necessary or desirable.

At its last meeting the Board tentatively placed the following items on its action agenda:

- o Development of a statement by the Career Board of its charter.
 - o Assessment of training available and new resources needed.
 - o Study of disincentives to entering or remaining in the classification specialty (input to be requested of the IAG Committee on Job Evaluation).
 - o Consideration of how to develop and maintain a sufficiently large
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and competent force of classifiers (input to be requested of the IAG Committee on Job Evaluation).

- o Thorough evaluation of the pros and cons of the various proposals for accreditation of personnel professionals.
- o Continued emphasis on "talking to anyone who'll listen to us."

One personnel director said that the personnel field as a whole is unattractive and asked why the disincentives review was limited to classifiers. Mr. Sumser answered that the Board is interested in all specialties but classification was the area given highest priority in discussions at Charlottesville. Richard Brady, Veterans Administration, also a Board member, added that the review would also be concerned with relative unattractiveness of the function at initial entry into the occupation, and Delbert Flint, Federal Communications Commission, another Board member, that relative attractiveness of the function as a factor in leaving would also be addressed.

Robert Crittenden, Community Services Administration (and president of the Classification and Compensation Society), urged that the Board begin on a sound base, that he hasn't seen anything that shows general incompetence among classifiers. Mr. Sumser said that there was no intention to be negative, but that we must strive to be as good as we can be; the Board is interested in systemic problems--training, management support, etc.--which might be corrected. Others suggested including adequacy of CSC support, classification problems created by legislation, and those caused by the budget/manpower ceiling process in the study.

Lloyd Grable, Energy Research and Development Administration, a former Board member felt that such areas are beyond the scope of the Board's responsibility, but Mr. Sumser said that he was recording the suggestion for Board consideration.

Mr. Junker briefly discussed the statistics available to the Career Board or anticipated in the future. He referred to data sheets which the Board provided to personnel directors last year, showing personnel professionals by series and grade, Governmentwide, and separately for larger agencies as of August 31, 1974. Similar outputs have been received for August 31, 1975, and will be forwarded soon. The Board is also beginning to receive data on distribution by minority group and sex, and on dynamics--accessions, reassignments, transfers, and losses.

Last year the Board developed guidance on career intern intake, published in Bulletin 931-1. It introduced the "fair share" concept, that the Government as a whole can meet its needs for personnel professionals only if each agency does its proportional share of the development of new entrants to the field. The Board also developed recommended intake levels by agency for FY 1976, and presumably will do so again for FY 1977. Mr. Junker said that no data are yet available to assess FY 1976 intake, but noted that the number of individuals at the career intern levels of GS-5/7 in August 1975 had been 1.7 percent fewer than in August 1974, and

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3.6 percent fewer for agencies other than CSC. In 1974 career interns at GS-5/7 averaged 10.8 percent of the personnel professionals for all agencies. Of 10 agencies which had been above average in 1974, 6 were above average in 1975, while 4 had fallen below; of 11 which had been below, 5 improved and 6 did not.

It was suggested that it would materially assist the Board in developing FY 1977 guidelines if personnel directors would provide information on their FY 1976 intake planning and results with reference to Bulletin 931-1. (This information can be mailed to the Federal Personnel Administration Career Board, Room 6321, 1900 E Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20415.)

Mr. Junker said that more data will be forthcoming as it is received and analyzed by the Career Board, and emphasized that they are building a system intended to put the Board and personnel directors in a position to better understand the profession's status and changes taking place.

Responding to the question about additional CSC involvement, Mr. Jacobson indicated that career management for the profession is a job for personnel directors, but he reaffirmed the Commission's strong interest in giving every possible support to the program and suggested that additional discussion in the IAG may be desirable rather than waiting for annual conferences.

III. Report on Timeliness of Service in Staffing Competitive Positions

Mr. Jacobson introduced John W. Fossum, Deputy Director, Bureau of Recruiting and Examining, who discussed the Timeliness of Staffing Study report. This report is based on a nationwide survey of staffing time frames. Actual time frames for processing selection actions involving CSC registers during the second half of FY 1975 were traced for 44 agency installations--from the time a request for the action was initiated within the agency to the time the appointee entered on duty. Within this total time frame, the number of workdays involved in each of four sequential steps was also identified.

- o Agency preparation of request for personnel action to receipt of request for certification at CSC.
- o CSC receipt of certificate request to certificate issuance.
- o Certificate issuance to selection action.
- o Selection action to EOD.

Basic findings indicate:

- o While timespans for filling lower level positions are relatively reasonable, time frames at GS-9 and above are chronically excessive.

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- o At GS-9 and above, CSC processing times regularly exceed standards and often extend total staffing time frames by several weeks or more. However, CSC processing time represents only a small proportion of total staffing time frames.
- o Considerable time elapses between initiation of a staffing action within an agency and receipt of a request at CSC.

CSC and agencies are both contributing to delays in staffing positions through the competitive process. Since this is a joint responsibility and a joint problem, solutions can only be effected through joint effort and action.

The TOSS survey represents an initial step in our continuing effort to enhance timeliness of staffing services. Building from this framework, CSC and IAG member agencies need to identify productive areas for further exploration and action. To start this process in motion, a meeting of the IAG Staffing Committee Steering Group has been scheduled for July 22. At that session, the Steering Group will discuss the report and outline "where we go from here." Once a proposed plan of action is developed, it will be presented to the full Staffing Committee for consideration. Personnel directors will be kept informed of the progress and any ideas or suggestions from the IAG member agencies are certainly welcome.

Announcements

Freedom of Information Impact on Agency and CSC Evaluation Reports

This subject was discussed at the June 24, 1976 meeting of the IAG Committee on Personnel Management Evaluation, where it was made clear that each agency is responsible for establishing its own policies and procedures on handling their internal evaluation reports.

At that meeting, it was explained that the Commission's policy for release of its reports would go beyond the actual requirements of the law and that future evaluation reports will be made available to the public in general through the CSC library and the regional offices. To protect individual privacy under exemption 6 of the FOI Act, information covered by that exemption will not be included in the public document.

Personnel directors will shortly receive an advance copy of the FPM Letter, describing the Civil Service Commission's policy.

Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures

-- Publication

- o Proposed guidelines have been published by the EEO Coordinating Council in the Federal Register, Vol. 41, No. 136, Wednesday, July 14, 1976.

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- o A 45-day period for comment by interested parties (including Federal agencies) is provided.
- o An earlier draft of uniform guidelines was provided to agencies for review last December and January. The newest version now in the Federal Register reflects a number of changes based on agency comments. For example:

- the definition of the kinds of employment decisions the guidelines apply to has been narrowed. Personnel practice and work assignments not used as a basis for additional pay are no longer treated as selection procedures.

-- Comments

- o The Federal Register requests that comments be directed to the Chairman of the EEO Coordinating Council (Deputy Attorney General Tyler, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530). The intention is for comments to be shared among all the member agencies.
- o The Federal Register announces CSC intention to issue FPM Supplement appendices on basis of comments received by the Council.
- o It is important, therefore, that agencies comment. All agencies are urged to do so, since various parties with many differing views about testing will be making their own voices heard.
- o Agency comments should be sent directly to the Council as indicated in the Federal Register, but if a copy could be sent to the CSC at the same time, it would be helpful. Copies of agency comments can be addressed to the Director, Bureau of Policies and Standards, Civil Service Commission, Washington, D.C. 20415.